

## The Resurrection in the Orthodox Church (Saint Justin Popovich)

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In the Orthodox Church, the Resurrection is not merely the ‘feast of feasts’, but the all-embracing feast, which is the soul of all the others and is always present in them. In it we find all the divine and theanthropic powers of the Saviour, which crush every sin, every death, every devil. Unceasing Resurrection, that is continuous Resurrection, is precisely what the life of all Orthodox Christians in the Church of the Saviour is: it is my life, your life and that of each of us. What is the Orthodox Church? It is the risen Christ Who lives forever. So we who live in it continually overcome sin, death and the devil through the Risen Lord. In this way, we raise ourselves from every grave, led and guided always in this task by the saints whom we praise every day. These are the true victors over death, sin and the devil through the Risen Lord and are, at the same time, those who raise us from our graves. Because, what is the aim of our Christian life? To defeat sin, death and the devil and thus to guarantee immortality and eternal life in the heavenly kingdom of the love of Christ. Because victory over any one of our sins is a victory over death, since every sin is our spiritual death. By overcoming sin and death, in reality we defeat the devil, since the devil is a being in whom sin and death are identical. But we people are human only through the Resurrection of the God/Man, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and through His form of immortality.



With the Resurrection of Christ, the resurrection of each person, you and me, becomes reasonable and natural, because the human element is a constituent part of the Theanthropic Being. This is why, in the Resurrection of the God/Man from the dead, the power and truth of our own resurrection from the dead are included (cf. (I Cor. 15, 12-16). Indeed, all of us are included in the Lord's theanthropic nature. And each one of us needs to be resurrected, because Christ rose, and all of us, from Adam to the last person on earth, are in Him, in a mysterious way. The Resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the dead are both together a theanthropic truth. The dead are resurrected because Christ rose; Christ rose and this is why the dead are raised.

It is beyond doubt that Christ did not rise for Himself but 'for our sake and for our salvation'. And also because the whole of human nature follows the human nature of Christ as its central core. By becoming human, the Divine Word demonstrated that we were created so that in Paradise, with a God-befitting life, there will be an incarnation of God, a body of God. Now the body of God will become really divine only if it is not mortal, if it does not strive to defeat death. But since, because of sin and through sin the human body has become enslaved to death and has become mortal, this is why the Word of God became a body Himself: so that He could save it from death, and save it from sin. This is the aim of the incarnation of the Saviour, which took place because of His love for us. This is why, through His Resurrection, the resurrection of all the dead has been ensured. The whole history of the human

race proves and highlights beyond a shadow of doubt that the Lord Christ is a permanent necessity for us in all worlds. Why? Because He gives us eternal life, annihilates death and everything mortal. The mortal element within us is whatever comes from sin, from evil, from the devil.

Because He alone has and provides for us eternal truth, eternal justice, eternal love, eternal beauty and annihilates lies, injustice, hatred and ugliness.

Because He gives us Paradise, bliss, joy and the immortal, theanthropic meaning to life and to the world, in heaven and on earth, to us humans and to every creature.

Because He alone gives us that which 'will not be taken away from us', either in this world or the next.

Because sin, death or the devil cannot take Christ our God away from us, nor His justice, immortality and eternity if we ourselves consciously do not want this. That is, provided we keep Christ our God within us, with faith, prayer, love, fasting, patience, humility, and with the other Gospel virtues, the invincible 'armour of God' (Eph. 6, 11-18).

What is this freedom that Christ gives? Freedom from sin, from death and from Satan. This freedom is nourished by eternal truth, eternal justice, eternal love and everything that is in Christ, divine and theanthropic. This is why Christ's freedom is the only true freedom that we can have in this world. All the other so-called freedoms are artificial, if they're not freedoms from death. Because sin inevitably enslaves us to death and to Satan. The only freedom more powerful than death is the freedom of Christ, and all the others are powerless servants of death. The only freedom more powerful than Satan is the freedom of Christ, and all the others are directly or indirectly subservient to the demon.

Those who believe in the Risen Lord Jesus with all their heart, with all their soul and with all their mind do not fear death, do not fear sin and, according to Saint John Chrysostom, 'are outside the sway of Satan'. Not only this, but they scorn death, scorn the demon, because, within them, they have Christ, our Lord and God, the only victor over Satan and the only One Who raises us from all deaths.

Sin is within us and, behold, we're distorted into monsters. The God-like being in sin! Is that not hell and horror? From the time when our ancestors were expelled from Paradise, that is from a life that was holy and free from sin, we've become the willing foundries of iniquity. And what is a foundry of iniquity if not a small-scale hell? The large-scale, eternal hell is merely the confluence of all the small hells which flow from us people, bearing us away with them. Sin is nothing other than life apart from the Sinless One, from God. And this is precisely what death is: first

the death of the spirit and then that of the body. Or, to put it better, sin is life lived continuously in death. Because sin and death are one and the same thing. Where there is sin, there is death. And again, where there is death, there is sin. But both of them derive from the creator of sin and of death, from the devil... So sin is never alone, but always has death and the devil with it, around it and behind it. And the devil is never alone; he always has death and sin before him. He's ever-present in every sin and every death. This trinity is inseparable. This is why freedom consists of liberation from this thrice-cursed trinity of sin, death and the devil. It was precisely because of this that Our Lord Jesus Christ became the only Saviour of the human race, because, through His Resurrection from the dead, He saved us from sin. The Resurrection is the victory over death, and hence over sin, and over the devil. Because the Resurrection is the victory of the Sinless One over sin, of the Immortal One over death; of God over the devil. Who else could have defeated death, except the Immortal One, or the devil if not God?